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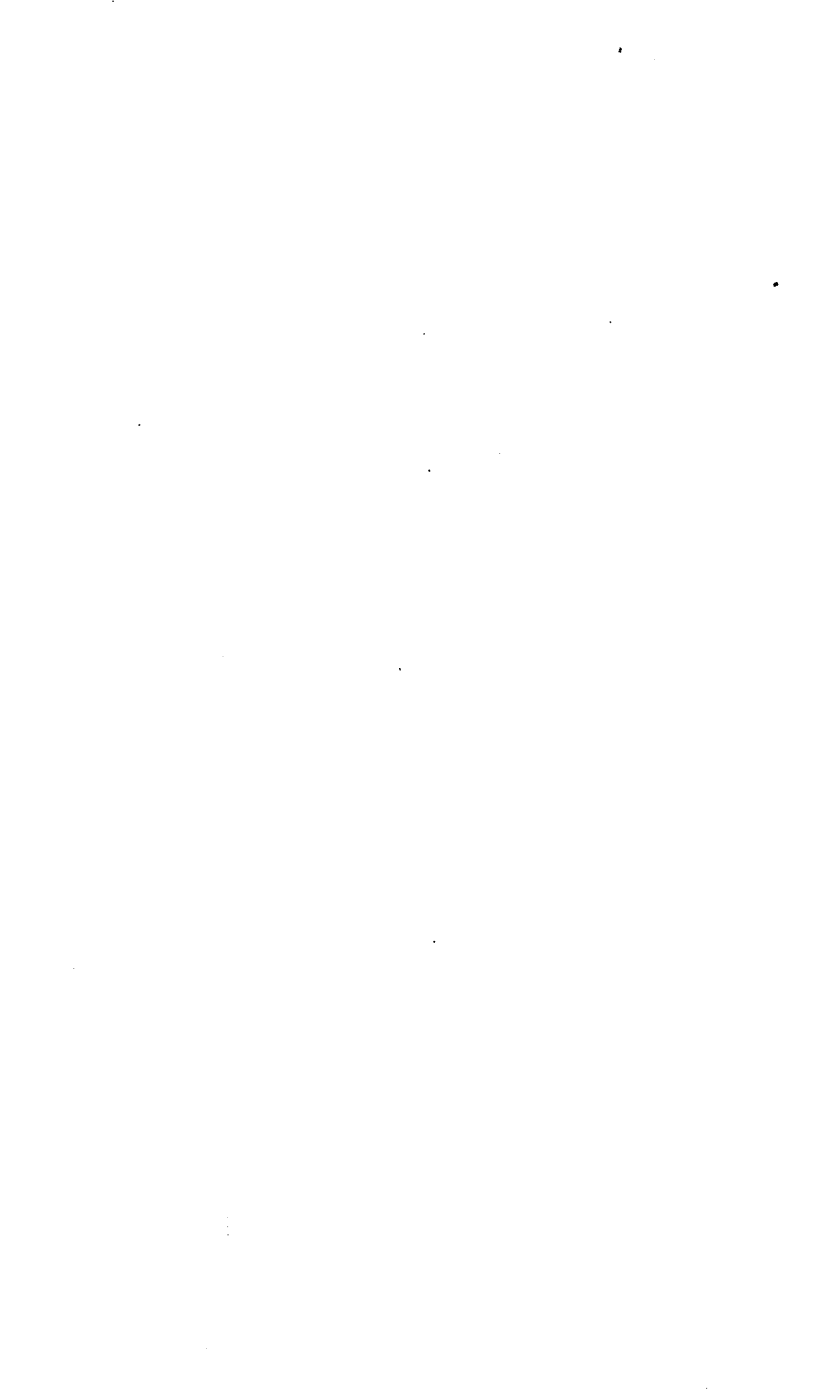
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THE LATE

REV. CHARLES BEARD, LL.D.

SERMONS

I

BY

THE REV. J. EDWIN ODGERS

II

BY

THE REV. R. A. ARMSTRONG

LIVERPOOL

EDWARD HOWELL, 28, CHURCH STREET

1888

Price Sixpence.

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*The first of these Sermons was preached at Renshaw Street Chapel,
on the Morning of Sunday, April 15th, 1888, and the second
at Hope Street Church, on the Evening of the same
day, and are now published by request.*

I.

“BUT WE HAVE THIS TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS, THAT THE EXCELLENCY OF THE POWER MAY BE OF GOD, AND NOT OF US.”—2 *Cor.* iv. 7.

THE epistle of Paul, from which we have read, is at once a vindication of his apostolate and an account of his stewardship. The apostle vindicates the sufficiency of his ministry by an appeal to facts, “Ye are my epistle, known and read of all men.” He declares his ability, his faithfulness, and his openness. There was no paltering with the truth, no craft of concealment, but a commending of the truth to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. Paul claimed to be taken for what he was, and to be judged by his own standard of sincerity. But there is another side to this—constantly present to the apostle’s mind. If he glories, it is because others, by unjust disparagement, have compelled him. When he looks within, when he speaks of the ideal sanctions of his ministry, every assertion of self is shrivelled up and cast aside.

The seal of his integrity is, that he can let a word not his own have free course through him ; that, not insisting on the letter, he has faith to see the spirit shaping itself in diverse forms of glory ; that he desires chiefly to be the medium through which another may catch sight of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And if such an one may be moved for a moment to dwell on the satisfactions of personal ability and influence—how frail is this mortal vehicle of light and truth ! The trials and woes of earth do not turn aside and spare him who lives not to himself alone, nor do angels watch that he does not dash his foot against a stone. He is troubled, perplexed, cast down : and finally, the earthly house of this tabernacle yields to a building of God, a house not made with hands.

Brethren, the story of Paul's ministry is the story of the Christian ministry to-day. There may be, on the one side, that which all can note—ability, influence, and measurable success, keenness of conflict and strife for one worthy cause or another ; but there must be, on the other side, that which the external observer cannot mark—the inward bowing down of self before the unseen and

ideal, the perpetual confession of insufficiency, the stern faithfulness whose peace is sought not of man but of God ; the difficult obedience that must discard this letter or that which has been learnt by heart, and once more take up the pilgrim's staff and follow the spirit that would lead into all truth ;— plain dealing with the word of God, preaching the truest only, following the Master's steps, becoming even as a servant for the sake of others—in all, the acknowledgement that the good treasure of our hearts is at its best when self is forgotten, and men see there but some lineament of the face of Christ, some ray of the glory of God.

And for us to-day this story finds a special application. We are met under the shadow of a great loss, we are bowed down by the sense of a common grief. In this place, of all others, we tearfully look back upon the ministry of one who testified with no ordinary power to the religion of the Spirit. I might repeat the words of Paul, and say, "Ye are his epistle, known and read of all men." But far beyond your limits that clear word, that sympathetic insight, that unflinching testimony for God and man, has made its way, and

has brought manifold tokens of answering recognition; and in the wider field of social and national interests the same voice was heard protesting ever against the hidden things of shame and dishonesty and craftiness, and commending the truth by an appeal to conscience ever as in the sight of God. How many of us have rejoiced in that power, that sufficing ability, as we saw the strong mind working with the artist's joyous confidence in the true eye and steady hand! Have we not seen the picture of some field of historical investigation growing rapidly under the master's touch, and marked the massing of detail accumulated with a rare industry, but with full assurance that this would ever be kept subordinate to strong and powerful outline? And then, by and by, came the pouring in of the light and shade of personal interest, whereby a chapter in the religious history of the world became as a Dutch picture of mediæval life and thought. Or was it some debate of contemporary interest, concerning the welfare of liberal religion or liberal theological education? Did you not know the keen delight of being on his side, and hearing the true thing—the thing that

needed saying—unerringly said, in every variety of persuasiveness and penetrativeness? Or, when we think of him as a preacher, do you not remember with what certainty he made his hearers stand by him on some specular mount, whence the confusions of daily life were seen as no longer hopeless, but as having some place in a divine order, or at all events, in God's thought and care; whence, whatever were the mists below, the heavenward view was always clear, and where the God-ward side of hope and duty was sure to gain some gleam of new and winning light?

From the outward story of his life, dare we turn to that other side, where the strong personality was as a little child before those deeper issues of life which we speak of as faith and prayer. Do we not already see not only himself, but the shining through him of the "Master light of all his seeing?" We see it now more than ever, when the earthen vessel is broken, and the house of the tabernacle is dissolved, and our eyes are carried from the seen and temporal to the unseen and eternal. But hard though the saying be, it is true of those who minister unto us of their truth

and helpfulness that it is expedient for us that they go away. It is when they go from us that we know them, and thank God for them, and with a new interpretative spirit read them aright, in proportion only as we realise that the excellency of the power was of God and not of themselves. Of the secrets of that inner life which is now with God, if I knew them, I could not speak; but are not those deeper issues closer now to our sympathetic understanding than ever before? As the grave closes the treasures of memory are unlocked; we begin in grateful reminiscence to attach this word of life, that quickening of a serious interest, to him from whom they were received. And as we meet in this house, with its so many hallowed associations, do not remembered words fall upon our ears with new sweetness and significance? I would not attempt to interpret for you all that the keenness of regret, the warmth of personal affection, the new sense of grateful indebtedness, must whisper in your ears. But we are friends, are we not? drawn together at this time by a fresh bond of sympathy, each, I doubt not, with some little store of testimony and reminiscence

which will ever be among the good treasures of the heart. Let me then speak of just these things as they arise in my own mind, making no attempt at doctrinal analysis, but asking simply what it is that has most truly "shined in our hearts" from Mr. Beard's ministry and teaching.

First of all, am I not right in saying that the whole of Mr. Beard's preaching strikes one as intensely religious? I think no one who heard him habitually could avoid being struck by the fact that he had no special interest whatever in propounding intellectual problems or attempting solutions of them; he was never so free from the sense of the reality of God and holy things that he could expatiate at will in realms of abstract speculation, as if he were indifferent whether the realities of faith were realities or not. Where difficulties naturally arose, and where he knew and felt them to be present to those before him, he dealt with them fearlessly, caring first of all to show that the religion of the pure in heart is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He never thought himself qualified to expound the secrets of the Most High. The general problems

of the world and of Providence, Mr. Beard frankly owned he could not solve on any hypothesis, but to him religion did not wait until the latest riddle of science was found to have in it something reconcilable to religious faith.

To him the fact of God was the starting point, the centre of all thought. The testimony of the soul was the central fact of all evidence of religion, and, living from that centre, he stood up to speak of the things that harrassed men's souls and perplexed their minds. He never made them think that it was an easy thing—a quite simple and familiar thing—to live at peace with the thought of God. To him there was always in it the hush of awe, the standing still of the soul, a turning away for a moment from the noise and bustle of our busy days into the silence of the infinite presence. That God should not be found, that the soul, blunted and dulled, should not know its need of him, or, knowing its need, should fail to find him, was to him the whole tragedy of human life. When he turned to religion, man's attitude toward God, the central figure of all history was Christ. In him he found

the purest testimony to the life of God in the soul of man. I think Mr. Beard was almost indifferent as to how men gained their thought of Christ, and whether it involved suppositions of a supernatural origin, or a supernatural nature in him, if only they loved him for himself. But he never refrained from testifying that if you make him but a part of a scheme of revelation; if you use a theory of his supernatural personality to prevent the cogency of the appeal of that life, those words, that death, from falling sheer upon your hearts here and now, and calling you to things spiritual, rebuking your indifference, and shaming you to self-renunciation—then you make the cross of Christ of none effect and put him to an open shame. Humanity has had Christ in it, and must have Christ in each, before the Kingdom of God shall have come.

So to Mr. Beard Christianity meant that the future of man can be truly built up on the spiritual side alone; that this or that material improvement, this or that set of better circumstances, might never bring aught but a material paradise, or might merely dull the aspirations of the soul.

And in this world as it is, often moved to mourn the pity and pathos of daily life, to him Christ stood as the inspiration of hope born ever new, and duty calling for the ministrations of brotherly love and the patient uplifting of soul by soul. I do not think Mr. Beard was deeply touched by many hopes that have roused others to think that there are royal roads in the direction of human progress. The causes of education, of philanthropy, of care for the bodily pains and woes of men—all these, as you know, had his constant sympathy and aid; but he never allowed himself to think that men might be made good by legislation, made spiritual by learning, or made unselfish by material comfort. He had more hope for the future in the simple power of the old appeal “for Christ’s sake” in one generation after another, than in any new phases of a vague enthusiasm of humanity. I once stood with Mr. Beard in a picture gallery before Luke Fildes’s picture “The Casual Ward.” I said to him, “That makes me want to cry.” He replied, “It makes me want to preach,” and you all know how he painted that picture over again; those poor ghosts of tattered and degraded

humanity in the drizzling fog, the clinging mist, ranged against the wall to take their turn for a night's lodging in the casual ward; the drunkard, half conscious of his misery, the unemployed working man sheltering his babe from the damp, the poor bundle of tattered finery that once was woman shrinking into the shade. And see on that page of his how the vision of Christ breaks in upon the hopeless scene, and the call once more comes to us, and the shame of our faithlessness smites us once again, and we know that if we only were true, the love of God could never fail to quicken and redeem the outcast and the forlorn! Hear those words again in all their directness and swiftness of challenge:

Let Christ once more, walking the world's miry ways, appear in all his gracious humanity in this cold London night, amid these broken-down petitioners for the pauper's bed. Do you think that the problem would be all insoluble to him? Would he fail, think you, in his attempt to kindle a spark of nobleness and self-control in that dilapidated drunkard's heart? Would he not take by the hand that poor victim of man's cruelty and her own weakness, and wakening in her again the instincts of purity and self-respect, bid her and help her to "go and sin no more"? In the inspiration of his gracious encouragement would

not the most dispirited poverty go forth to breast the world again, and before his meekness even savage brutality be charmed to gentle ways? . . . It is, after all, only religion that can grapple with the evils of our social state with any fair hope of overcoming them. Will legislation create a soul beneath those ribs of moral death? What would the number or stringency of Acts of Parliament, permitting this or prohibiting that, do to put a new vigour into the nerveless will, or give the drugged conscience fresh energy of protest? And yet victories have been won on fields apparently as hopeless as this street before the gate of the casual ward, but only by one agency—the love of God and the love of Christ, reflected to the dazed eyes in the helpful, patient love of man—this alone avails to lift poor humanity out of the lowest slough of despond and degradation. That even this fails often, I know too well; but I know also that it is the only thing that ever wins.

Those who knew the record of Mr. Beard's life are well aware of that concentration of his hope on the persistence of the soul and the infinite worthwhile of saving it. This, while it never narrowed his interest or limited his exertions, gave him a special thrill of sympathy for all who laboured in that particular direction. Those who heard him speak of Domestic Missions, and who knew the sympathy he had with them, know that there are names, familiar in our mouths,

of men who had devoted their lives to the poor or the sinful, which he could never mention without a throb. He did not confound the work of the minister with general philanthropy, nor did he admit that general good citizenship acquitted the layman of all distinctively religious duty. Public testimony has been borne on all hands to his public usefulness. It was natural to him to be an active citizen; he lived in the life of this great city; he loved work and workers; he had a kind of artistic liking for a piece of work well done, of whatever sort it was; and deep as were the sources of his individuality, secluding as were the special studies to which he was devoted, long as were the hours of his sedentary labour, he shared not merely the efforts and interests, but also the anxieties and reverses, of this great commercial city. I remember his saying that "no man has any business to preach in Liverpool who does not know the current price of cotton." The way in which he opened his stores of learning, with marvellous felicity of exposition and illustration, to any who could follow with interest, is sufficiently known to all who have seen the numbers gathered

round him on Sunday evening in this chapel. You know, too, something of his sympathy with the young, and that frank companionship into which he admitted them. Of his wide religious sympathy, there is no need that I should speak. Many marvelled that he, so little of a sectarian, so keen in his appreciation of the venerable historical forms of Christianity, should be a Nonconformist : that a man who entered so deeply into the life of the Quietists of Port Royal, and was gladly hailed by High Churchmen as "sound and exhaustive" on the subject of the unbroken continuity of the English Church before and after the Reformation, should be a Unitarian. Historical study never taught him that creeds, confessions, and articles amounted all to much the same thing, or to nothing at all ; and having rejected dogmatism in its venerable historic forms, he would tolerate it in no other guise. He never used historical argument as a mere apologetic, and his whole turn of mind was averse to the old methods of scriptural controversy : but he felt a deeper assurance as the years went on as to his being in his rightful place in that ministry of faith and freedom which he

exercised in this pulpit. And this is how he interpreted the ecclesiastical tradition he inherited :—

Noblesse oblige : the descendants of the confessors of 1662 should be above worldly temptation : those who sit in Lardner's seat, foremost in sacred learning : the successors of Priestley, full of unselfish allegiance to the truth : those who own the same fellowship as Lindsey, not ashamed of a deep manly piety : those who call Channing brother, of saintly heart and life."

He respected his calling, and never suffered another to disparage it. He would not allow it to be assumed that the ministry might be content to be superseded by other agencies, educational or philanthropical. He looked to religion to save, in every generation, the soul which might be lost in the midst of material progress. He believed in the permanence, amid changed conditions, ecclesiastical and theological, of the ministry of brotherly kindness and the preaching of the word. Mr. Beard's own words have drawn the picture of the Christian ministry of the future as he conceived it :—

I venture to think that to restore Christianity to the place which it has lost and is more and more losing in the hearts of thoughtful and educated men, still more to give

back to it its old victorious energy in dealing with the sinful and the wretched, what is chiefly needed is a prophet of this latter day, who in the keenness and directness of his religious insight will speak at once a piercing and a reconciling word. Such a one will be deeply penetrated with the scientific spirit, rejoicing in the unveiling of nature as an unveiling of God, and desiring only the plain truth of history that he may trace in it the working of the Divine hand. But he will be too full of the direct vision to lose himself in the wilds and wastes of criticism, or to be led astray by the pedantries of scientific investigation. I dare venture to predict that, like every other true prophet, the future will fill his eye and heart too completely to suffer him to be a bond-slave of the past: present revelations always overbear old theologies, and no living Church ever supplies the model of the New Jerusalem. I have no fear lest he should fall out of the ranks of Christ's soldiers, for I do not believe that religion has anything to offer to man that the Gospel does not hold, and I notice that what is strong and inspiring in newer systems is Christian in essence, if not always in name. I know that when he speaks men will crowd to hear him, and lay their hearts and lives in his hands; for the religious instincts of humanity are ineradicable, and even if they sometimes sleep, wake always to life and energy again. And though his clear and penetrating accents may not fall upon our living ears, and we can do nothing to direct the operation of the Spirit of God, which, like the wind, 'bloweth where it listeth,' yet it belongs to us of this generation to make straight the way of his coming by living and working in the light of our best knowledge and most intimate convictions.

In a ministry like ours, where the relation between elder and younger ministers has always been so kindly—the more so because the relation is a personal, not an official, one—no more helpful friend and adviser than Mr. Beard could be found. To us who remain, his loss seems irreparable. To us, his brethren and sons in the ministry, how is the responsibility of our service deepened by such a withdrawal! As the front rank falls away, the brunt of the battle must be borne by us. The work for a time is ours—the burden and the heat of the day; till we in our turn find we are not alone in the field; a younger generation is upon our heels. Wisdom did not die with the fathers—will not die with us :—

So the old order changeth, giving place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

II.

“WHEN SHALL I COME AND APPEAR BEFORE
GOD?”—*Psalm xlii*, 2.

FROM that wonderful double Psalm which we read together the other day, when we said “farewell” to all that could die of him whom we commemorate to-night, and have read again this evening, I take this great cry of longing, “When shall I come and appear before God?” They say it was some captive prince or preacher of Israel who, with his heart’s blood, wrote this wondrous song. Led in bonds by the mocking host of foes towards the distant land of exile, from the steeps that skirt the snowy heights of Hermon, while brooklet seems to call to brooklet amid the roar of the cascades on the mountain-side, the servant of God casts back across the fords of Jordan a yearning gaze upon the land of his affection. He who had so often led the multitude to the Temple of his

race, and known the ecstasy of the devout as he bowed before the very altar of the Most High, buffeted, and bruised, and mocked with the gibe from a hundred voices, "Where is now your God?" pours out his soul within him as his reluctant feet are hurried far away from the sacred spot. Shall he ever again go up at the head of the thronging crowd to the consecrated shrine? When shall he come and appear before God? The very waters of the mountains seem to overwhelm him. His sorrow is greater than he can bear. Yet "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? God will surely bring the day again, when I shall praise him who is the help of my countenance." And as more and more the shoulder of the giant hill, down whose further slope his captors wend, hides from his longing view the home of his hope and faith, that mighty faith asserts itself again within his breast, and, with the calm assurance of one who trusts his God, the conviction takes hold of him that the oppression of the enemy shall not have sway for ever; that again he shall go to the altar of God, his exceeding joy; that, though cast

down to-day in soul, and disquieted to-day at heart, he shall yet again indeed praise him who is the health of his countenance and his God.

“When shall I come and appear before God?”

It is in the anguish of intensest longing that the cry is wrung from the captive son of Israel. To appear before God, that is the one yearning of his soul—a yearning like the panting of the hart for the cool waters. To appear before God, that is the highest good the lacerated spirit of the man can image. If he could appear before God, that would be the perfect joy and peace. Some say that he who chanted this phrase of longing is the same who, long years afterwards, in the midst of the pomp of the heathen camp, declared, “I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord—the humblest porter in the temple of my people—than to dwell, in whatever ease, in the tents of wickedness.” “When shall I come and appear before God?”—to be face to face with God, as the Israelite thought he alone could be who stood before the solemn altar of Mount Zion, that is the consummation on which all the tumultuous yearning of his heart is set.

“When shall I come and appear before God?” Is it not a lesson for us of Christendom? Here is this king or priest of olden Israel, longing not for the things for which we mostly cherish life or liberty, but solely to stand in the presence of his God. A rude notion his, you say, of that awful, divine presence, shut up in a temple made with hands, and flashing its celestial light only in a shrine built up of ivory, and cedar-wood, and marble. A poor thought of the presence-chamber of the All Holy? Yes, but this Israelite, in his bonds, longed for it with passionate desire. “When shall I come and appear before God?” While we—how often have we shrunk from it in dread—desired, beyond every other wish, to put off to the uttermost the solemn day when we shall come and appear before God in that more dazzling presence with which Christian men believe that God will shine on them when the gates of death are passed.

“When shall I come and appear before God?” We speak of death as meeting our God. And no man can think of the sleep which we call death, and the waking that shall be beyond, without

believing that, in some solemn way, the Living God will then shine in upon our souls with a vividness of conscious presence before which all earthly apprehending of him shall seem but dimly groping in the dark. We believe that, in some strange new sense, when we die, we, too, shall come and appear before God. We conceive this death emphatically as a meeting of the soul with God. And yet we think of death with dread, or, if not with dread, as a thing from which to shrink, to long to put off to the utmost. We account men stricken if it come to them early, fortunate, enviable, happy, if it defer its coming through a long tale of years.

It seems to me that a terrible responsibility rests on those who have so closely linked the thought of the passing of the soul with symbols of gloom and ghastly images that dwell upon decay. To have made one little child afraid of death is to have hung a dead-weight upon the wings of the spirit. Thank God, the gross paraphernalia which have vulgarised the perennial sorrow of the human race, and gone so far to chill and sicken the healthy, glowing trust of the heart

that to die is but to pass into nobler life, are being swept away from our ceremonials of mourning; and the sweet thought which taught the sorrowing long ago to mingle some fair, white symbols with the darkness of the funeral whenever it was the young they mourned, is now largening into the true and beautiful symbolism which, while banishing the darker emblems of gloom, shrouds the dead with bright and fragrant flowers, God's own blessed emblems of hope, and life, and immortal beauty.

“When shall I come and appear before God?” There are those who with deprecation and with terror ask the solemn question, but there are those as well who ask it with restless and impatient longing. This world, which God made so fair, has been so hard with some; this human society, which he meant to be full of all loving sympathy and kindly helpfulness, has proved to many so stern, and cold, and cruel, that they look to the hour of the parting of the spirit as the hour of escape, and grudge the dragging years which divide them from that goal beyond which the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are

at rest. Ah ! how sad that here in this wondrous world which God has made ; this world that glows now in the gladness of the midday sun, and now moves noiseless on its path with the deep peace of the benediction of the midnight stars upon its breast ; this world, even now bursting into all the miracle of the springtide bloom and verdure ; this world, the home of millions whom God has called his sons and daughters, and fills with the mystic powers of love and faith, there should still be a countless multitude who only long that the weary task were over, and if they do not cry, “ When shall I come and appear before God ? ” are dumb because the very thought of God has receded from their lives, and it is only for the dead stillness of the grave, with the eternal silence of unconsciousness, that their sick souls pant !

But between these two great masses of the sisters and brothers of our kind, between the foolish ones who await death with nameless dread, and the unhappy ones who desire it solely as release from the bitterness of life, there stand a nobler array of souls with whom the cry “ When shall I come and appear before God ? ” is the

high utterance of a faith true, and grand, and beautiful. There are men who throw into the task of the mortal life a manly energy, which makes that life in its successes glorious, and even in its disappointments, and what may seem its failures, full of a sober trust that all is well, and this is not the end ; men, who shading their eyes now and again from the glare of earth, look onward with wistful gaze to the great day of the passing of the soul, and descry the softened light that hovers round that distant bourne, and know that what it means is the largening and deepening of the powers of the spirit for wider and diviner tasks. They neither haste nor rest. They are willing to remain long here with us, and they love the work which God has given them to do, and their hearts are warm with the affections which God permits to blossom on the earth ; but they are ready, none the less, whenever the hour shall sound, to move forward to the life immortal. They know the feebleness that clings to even the bravest earthly service ; they know, none so well, their own mortal limitations ; they know how the strength fails, yes, and even

the ardour, too, in the weaker moments ; and with a great hope they think of a further life, where the dim avenues open to the flesh-clad spirit shall not be the Soul's only Way to God, nor the faint faith of hearts beating with mortal life God's only Way to the Soul ; but spirit shall flow to spirit, and the risen soul shall be one with the Father and his Christ even as the Father was in Christ and Christ was in the Father. And it is with a solemn, awful gladness that such as these pause now and again in the strain and stress of service, and ask themselves in the silence, " When shall I come and appear before God ? "

Of such, I think, was he whose memorials are with us in the crowds that thronged the other day to bid " farewell," and the regrets that are stirred so deeply in our hearts. Assuredly he did not *fear* to die ; and I doubt whether, even in utmost weakness, he even *longed* to die. So long as God bid him labour here he was ready for the labour in all manliness and courage. His interest in the work and duty of his time and his place was keen and vivid, and he could never

be sparing in the devotion of body and mind to their fulfilment. But, I think, the further outlook was always there in reserve, not perhaps much spoken of, but a working part of daily consciousness none the less, the sense that this was only the beginning, and that there was a further life beyond, of which indeed it was vain to conjecture the mode and manner, yet which should surely be a sublime expansion and purification of all faculties and talents accorded to him here below. It was fifteen years ago—long before the shadow of illness had fallen on him, when his physique was still the splendid instrument of his still ripening powers—that he said to one of his great congregations in the Concert Hall:—

Do not ask me—for I cannot tell you—what the characteristics of the future life will be. That is a mystery which God has hidden from our view. As for me (he added), as a minister of religion, it has been my duty to stand at grave after grave of those whom I have known and loved, until it seems to me as if there were more there than here that were near to my heart. So it is a necessary condition of human existence, that as we pass on our pilgrimage towards the grave, there perpetually drop away from our side those who make

home home-like, until at last, when our time comes, our home is not here, but every tie of the heart is fast bound to a home above.

Nor shall we understand all that these words meant till we remember that that word "home" could never stand to Charles Beard for a place of idle ease, but only for the place where, day and night, tasks of preparation were to be done for the enlightenment and redemption of the world.

And it is always in laborious, useful, manly life, that this manly view of death strikes root and finds its sustenance. Neither they who cry out to us always to be thinking of death and the saving of our souls, nor they who bid us plunge into the world's work and put all that may be beyond the grave out of our calculations, preach the true mind of Christ; but only they who proclaim that this stage of being is the beginning of a sublime ascent, and that for our rising we best prepare by nobly doing duty here.

It is the strongest, brightest men, that speak most quietly and confidently of the life that shall there be lived. Said Victor Hugo :

I feel that *I* shall be complete only there above. That which later I shall speak, now I only stammer.

And again,

For more than half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and verse, but I feel that I have expressed only the thousandth part of what is in me. When I shall have lain down in the tomb, I may say, like so many others, I have finished my day's work. But I shall not say, I have finished my life. My labour will begin again on the morrow. The tomb is not a blind alley: it is an avenue. It closes at twilight, but opens at the aurora.

If the brilliant tones of our friend, which we so well remember, are but as stammering to the speech which now is his, if all the lofty truth which he declared is but a fragment of the truth which glows within him now, what a breaking forth of new life and power his emergence from the weakness and the pain into the aurora of the heavenly day!

And so, Christian men and women, I hold that this man, with his noble powers of mind and speech, has set before us, through the swift years of strenuous service, the true attitude which we

ought all to take towards that great change which is to be. "Prepare to meet thy God," cries the ringing voice of prophecy across the ages. Yes, prepare to meet thy God! But the preparation lies as little in the constant set of our thought towards that hour of transformation, as in the shunning of the thought as though it were a nightmare. They who think there is no work to be done here in the places of the world, amid the bustle of men and the politics of nations, because here we have no abiding city, are as far from the mind of Christ as they who would plunge into the turmoil of the world, so immersing their minds in its business or its pleasure that all thought of the inevitable passing of the spirit is driven out. We are to think of what men call "Death"; but we are to think of it with a strong and sober hope and gladness, as the dawning of a day of more efficient service, wherein we shall work with wider knowledge, with larger wisdom, with broader sympathies, with fuller consciousness that we are very near to God. And when death comes to such as so have lived, be sure it will not come in terrors, but with soft step and benignant countenance,

with the touch of healing and the kiss of peace.

Even that old Psalmist who wrote one of the sweetest of the Psalms, had marked with what benediction death draws near to the good and true. "Mark the perfect man," said he, "and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." And if you could count up how many of us find their surest proof that we are immortal beings in the words or looks of the good whose passing we have seen, I think you would understand how not a day goes by in Christendom in which God leaves himself without this witness. No textual battle, no metaphysical discussion has ever done a tithe so much to make us sure that there is no death, but death is the entering into life, as the radiant seal which the departing soul leaves on the mortal clay.

And now we may all take new faith and joy because another is added to this mighty host of witnesses. Some of you knew him who is gone from us chiefly as a man with splendid vigour, strenuous in battle, courageous in word, a man whom that olden picture often seemed to fit, "rejoicing as a

strong man to run a race." And the fountains of tenderness, the still depths of faith, that lay beneath, perhaps some among you were not often privileged to see. This was a man of stalwart and masculine sense. What is the lesson of his ebbing life?

I am permitted to tell you how, in the last hours, as the strength faded from the frame, there fell upon him the wonderful light that only comes from heaven; and how he, too, the man whose life had been led as "a man of the world" in the noblest sense, bore on his countenance, as he passed, the sure and wonderful signs of the little child of God.

"When shall I come and appear before God?" Brethren, as for you and me, not one of us knows when, and it is well that we do not know. But this we know, that if manfully and patiently we do our duty here, then the transfiguration, when it comes to us, will be the beginning of a joy which human words can never tell.

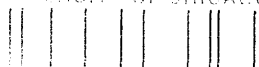
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